

***May 18-22 is National Small Business Week***

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Charlie Wilson (OH-6) today cosponsored the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Act. Wilson joins a bipartisan group working to make health insurance more affordable, predictable, and accessible for small businesses and the self-employed.

"Skyrocketing health insurance costs are making it nearly impossible for many small businesses to provide insurance to their employees," Wilson said. "Small businesses are the backbone of our local economies, and costly health care should not determine whether they survive or fail."

The legislation would offer tax incentives to encourage states to reform poorly functioning small group insurance markets and encourage the development of state purchasing pools backstopped by a voluntary nationwide pool. The SHOP Act would offer small business owners a targeted tax credit of \$1000 per employee (\$2000 for family coverage) if the employer pays at least 60% of their employees' premiums, and a bonus tax credit if they pay more than 60% of the premiums. Self-employed individuals would get a \$1,800 annual tax credit (\$3,600 for family coverage) to purchase health insurance.

The SHOP Act would also create an easier way for small businesses and the self-employed to shop for health insurance. The program would set up an all-encompassing web site providing comparative information about a variety of plans. Employers will be able to choose from new, private nationwide plans as well as plans offered in their state through SHOP.

The bill has received support from a wide variety of groups, including the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the National Association of Realtors, Families USA, the National Partnership for Women and Families, and the National Restaurant Association.

"I can't think of a better way to honor small businesses than by supporting legislation that will help them control health care costs, preserve choice and provide quality, affordable care for their employees," Wilson said.